



Statement

107th Session of the International Labour Conference

by

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**The Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the United Nations
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**STATEMENT BY HON.RAVINDRA SAMARAWEERA,
MINISTER OF LABOUR AND TRADE UNION RELATIONS
OF THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF SRI LANKA
AT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF 107TH SESSION OF
INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE (ILC), GENEVA**

4TH JUNE,2018.

Mr. President/ Vice President

Director General of the ILO

Hon. Ministers, Excellences, Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great pleasure for me to address this 107th session of the International Labour Conference, representing the Government of Sri Lanka. It is with great interest that we have noted the forward looking proposals in the report of the Director General of the ILO titled “The Women at Work- The push for equality”- which is an important and integral part of the seven Centenary initiatives launched by the ILO.

Equality in the world of work and empowering Women and Girls is a fundamental aspect, and a clear Goal stipulated in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. We will not be able to realize ‘sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth’ without properly addressing the inequalities in the world of work. Breaking the stereotyping of certain jobs as ‘more feminine’ may need change of attitudes and awareness raising across all strata of societies. As correctly stated in the DG’s Report, building a new ‘care giving economy’, which may be hard to replace in its entirety with the rapidly evolving technologies, could be an effective opening to have a level

playing field for women workers. The concept of 'flexible working hours', too could make a clear positive impact for women to have quality time with family and work, and also to enhance gender equality. In this regard, I strongly believe that the trade unions have a vital role to play in educating their members to make them understand the global phenomenon and changing work environment.

Mr. President/ Vice President,

In my country, Sri Lanka, we are pleased to record very high standards and gender parity in several social indicators such as in Health, Education, etc. However, we need to make more efforts in improving the participation of women in the labour force. As in the case of many developing countries there is a need to break gender stereotyping in certain jobs. The Government of Sri Lanka is taking a number of initiatives to address this constraint.

As the first country in the world to implement a National Decent Work Action Plan on par with the ILO Principles, we have also made 'labour rights', a dedicated priority area in our National Human Rights Action Plan 2017-2021 prepared through inclusive and transparent consultations with all relevant stakeholders. It seeks to address several key areas of concern, including occupational safety, elimination of child labour, regulations in domestic worker sector etc, with a view to bringing in qualitative improvement in the welfare of workers.

Adhering to the Principle of tripartism and social dialogue, Sri Lanka is now in the process of introducing a 'single employment law', giving effect to the principle of non - discrimination based on gender and other forms of discrimination in the labour market. Also bringing amendments to the current labour legislation to cover domestic workers in terms of wages, conditions of work and social security, is also work in progress.

Mr. President/ Vice President,

It is in this backdrop that Sri Lanka is pleased to engage in the initiatives related to Global March against Child Labour, particularly focusing on safety and health aspects of young employees. We have made remarkable strides in preventing hazardous forms of child labour and I am pleased to share with this august Assembly that Sri Lanka is ready to offer its expertise in this area to support the endeavours of ILO.

Also, Sri Lanka strongly believes that we must make the workplace an environment free of harassment, including in the domestic worker sector. It is timely to have the initiative by the Governing Body on including a standard setting item on 'violence and harassment against women and men in the world of work' in the agenda of the 107th Session of the ILC. A balanced outcome that is firmly grounded on the 'Declaration of Philadelphia' could make a tangible solution to the issues of violence and harassment in the workplace and could address the underlying causes of gender inequality. Sri Lanka is of the firm view that in realizing the Decent Work Agenda, all these steps remain as strong building blocks to the labour architecture that promotes rights and standards in the world of work.

I thank you.